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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 000773

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PARM PREL MOPS IZ CA

SUBJECT: CANADA WON'T JOIN MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ
WITHOUT ANOTHER UNSC RESOLUTION

REF: OTTAWA 00747

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Brian Flora for reasons 1.5
(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Corrected version of Ottawa 00747 (Changing classification to Confidential--please destroy previous cable).

¶2. (SBU) Summary: Echoing Prime Minister Chretian's March 17 comments in Parliament, Canadian Deputy Foreign Minister Lavertu formally notified A/DCM Gerson that, absent another UNSC resolution, Canada would not participate in a U.S.-led military coalition against Iraq. End Summary.

¶3. (SBU) A/DCM Leslie Gerson and British High Commissioner Sir Robert Andrew Burns were advised by Deputy Foreign Minister Gaetan Lavertu in a meeting at Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) on March 17 that the Canadian government will not join in military operations against Iraq in the absence of a new U.N. Security Council resolution. During the meeting Mr. Lavertu made the following points:

-- Canada has been clear in stating its deep concern regarding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program and its continued defiance of calls by the international community for it to disarm; it has no illusions about the nature of the repressive and brutal regime of Saddam Hussein;

-- It therefore strongly supported the unanimous adoption by the UNSC of resolution 1441 with its clear message regarding 'serious consequences' if Iraq failed to disarm; Canada recognizes the considerable efforts made by Security Council members during these past months - led by the U.S. - to find a common way forward in terms of ensuring Iraqi compliance with its international obligations;

-- The GOC knows that this has not been easy and has taken considerable political time and effort to try to manage this issue through the United Nations; it is grateful that this effort was made, believing that United Nations Security Council is the appropriate forum within which to determine this important matter of international peace and security.

-- Canada has said that, if there were a clear decision by the UN Security Council, it would do its part; it deeply regrets the inability of Security Council members to come to agreement on the issue of a second resolution, despite the efforts made. Canada did its best to try and bridge the deep divisions within the Council and understands why we have decided that we now need to act on the serious consequences spelled out in 1441;

-- While Canada intends to leave its 1280 military personnel, ships and aircraft in the region to continue to contribute to the campaign against terrorism, as the Prime Minister stated today in the House of Commons, it will not be a member of the military coalition against Iraq;

-- In its public messaging the GOC will stress that the issue is, and continues to be, about Iraq; its non-compliance; its weapons of mass destruction and its grudging cooperation with the inspectors, even in the face of Security Council unanimity and the build up of military forces in the region. Iraq bears the responsibility for the consequences of its actions and continued violation of international law. Canada will also say that it has decided not be a member of the military coalition and will concentrate its efforts in the campaign against terrorism - through its ships in the Gulf and its forthcoming contribution to ISAF in Afghanistan;

-- Canada's commitment to the coalition effort under Operation Enduring Freedom is undiminished and the horror of September 11th is still fresh in its minds;

-- Canada is also preparing to play a major role in the continued stability and security of Afghanistan, through ISAF; this summer it will deploy a Battle Group to Afghanistan for a twelve-month period; Canada believes that these tasks are more important than ever;

-- Canada will also do its part in humanitarian assistance and post conflict resolution in Iraq, but believes that these

activities must take place under the auspices of the United Nations. In this respect the GOC would urge Council members to work assiduously to come to agreement within the Council on this important aspect of the Iraq crisis; in this way all members of the international community will be able to make their contribution to improving the lives of the long-suffering Iraqi people.

14. (U) We note that Prime Minister Chretien first announced his government's position earlier in the day during the regular question period in the House of Commons. To loud applause from the Liberal Party majority, Chretien said Canada would not participate in military action against Iraq unless a new Security Council resolution authorized such action. He claimed no country has worked harder than Canada to bridge the gap between factions in the Security Council. The Prime Minister also repeated statements he had made in a March 9 appearance on an American news program, that there was no need to go to war because Saddam is now surrounded and monitored by UN weapons inspectors.

15. (U) Prime Minister Chretien also indicated that Canadian naval vessels carrying out escort and surveillance duties in the Arabian Sea as part of the war against terrorism will continue on those assignments. Rejecting suggestions that the vessels might be reassigned to take part in a war with Iraq, Chretien referred to the present mission of the vessels as an important one for the Canadian navy. He also said that a very small group of Canadian military personnel who are assigned through exchange programs to British and American units in the region are not in combat roles, and will not be removed.

16. (C) Comment: The Prime Minister's statement today regarding the need for a second Security Council resolution was a departure from Canada's previous waffling on whether a second resolution would be necessary for Canadian participation in military actions against Iraq. In justifying his government's decision not to join in military action against Iraq, Chretien pointed to the failure of the latest British proposal to gain any traction in the Security Council in recent days as "very important". During his meeting with the A/DCM, however, the Deputy Foreign Minister stressed that, even though they remain unable to endorse military action on the basis of resolution 1441 alone, Canada remains a strong friend and ally of both the United States and the U.K. Canada, in its public statements, will voice its understanding of any action we undertake and will continue to place the blame on Iraq. We will not, he said, hear criticism or doubts expressed by Ottawa.

17. (C) Comment Continued: Following the meeting, Political Director Jim Wright emphasized that, despite public statements that the Canadian assets in the Straits of Hormuz will remain in the region exclusively to support Enduring Freedom, they will also be available to provide escort services in the Straits and will otherwise be discreetly useful to the military effort. The two ships in the Straits now are being augmented by two more enroute, and there are patrol and supply aircraft in the UAE which are also prepared to "be useful." This message tracks with others we have heard. While for domestic political reasons and out of a deep-seated Canadian commitment to multilateralism the GOC has decided not to join in a U.S. coalition of the willing, they will refrain from criticism of our actions, express understanding, and focus their public comments on the real culprit, Iraq. They are also prepared to be as helpful as possible in the military margins, an aspect of their role which we intend to clarify. End comment.

KELLY